



## ICC PRESS RELEASE

### **Inuit United in Solidarity for Indigenous Communities in Canada Following Discovery of 215 Children in Unmarked Graves**

June 1, 2021 – Anchorage, Alaska – Inuit in the circumpolar Arctic region are unified in expressing solidarity with Indigenous peoples in Canada affected by the revelation that the remains of 215 Indigenous children were discovered in unmarked burials near a former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia.

The news of this discovery near the former residential school by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation has shocked and saddened people around the world. "We stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples across the country and worldwide who have been horribly traumatized by colonialism," said Monica Eil-Kanayuk President of ICC Canada. "This is a very dark chapter of our history in Canada which we are all dealing with. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission had specific recommendations relating to records of this nature. We are on a relentless path towards healing and reconciliation. This very tragic news will no doubt open old wounds from victims."

The discovery was made during the weekend of May 22<sup>nd</sup> by a member of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation in British Columbia who had resolved to find the graves of the missing children.

ICC Chair Dalee Sambo Dorough stated, "Our hearts go out to the members of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation who are undoubtedly retraumatized by this discovery. Please know that Inuit stand united behind your struggle to uncover the truth about what happened. We lend our support in calling on the Government of Canada to fund the discovery of missing children at other former residential school sites across Canada so that justice, and closure, can happen for the Indigenous Community. We lend our support in calling for Pope Francis to apologize to the victims of residential schools in Canada, and to release Catholic Church documents that could reveal the identity of the children in the graves near the former residential school in Kamloops, as well as other residential schools across Canada."

The President of ICC Greenland, Hjalmar Dahl commented, "We are in complete solidarity and compassion with the families and all Indigenous peoples in Canada regarding this horrible discovery. I understand there are hundreds of former residential schools across Canada. I hope justice will prevail for the families, and the truth is revealed about how this happened."

Jimmy Stotts, President of ICC Alaska, added, "We were shocked to hear about this tragedy and our hearts are with our brothers and sisters in Canada."

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*The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an Indigenous Peoples' Organization (IPO), founded in 1977 to promote and celebrate the unity of 180,000 Inuit from Alaska (USA), Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). ICC works to promote Inuit rights, safeguard the Arctic environment, and protect and promote the Inuit way of life. In regard to climate change, we believe that it is crucial for world leaders and governments to recognize, respect and fully implement the human rights of Inuit and all other Indigenous peoples across the globe.*